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**Testimony for the
Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee
Jennifer Widness, President
Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges
February 7, 2023**

On behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges (CCIC), I am submitting testimony on:

- Proposed H.B. 5437: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A STUDENT LOAN SUBSIDY PROGRAM FOR POLICE OFFICERS.
- Proposed H.B. 5438: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A DEBT-FREE STATE COLLEGE PROGRAM FOR EMPLOYEES OF DAY CARE FACILITIES, HOME HEALTH CARE AGENCIES AND NURSING HOMES.
- Proposed H.B. 5441: AN ACT CONCERNING COLLEGE GRADUATES WHO WORK IN THE FIELDS OF EDUCATION OR HEALTH CARE IN THE STATE.
- Proposed H.B. 5745: AN ACT CONCERNING THE TRAINING OF SOLAR INSTALLATION WORKERS.
- Proposed H.B. 6097: AN ACT CONCERNING TUITION WAIVERS FOR PARAEDUCATORS WHO SEEK A DEGREE IN EDUCATION.
- Proposed S.B. 231: AN ACT REQUIRING THE INSURANCE COMMISSIONER TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSURANCE INDUSTRY AND INSURANCE WORK FORCE IN THIS STATE.
- Proposed S.B. 740: AN ACT CONCERNING CRITICAL SKILLS IN DEMAND BY EMPLOYERS IN THE STATE.
- S.B. 936: AN ACT CONCERNING WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT.

The bills before you today all seek to create new workforce programs to support various industries across the state. Some of the bills focus exclusively on supporting individuals that attend (or attended) programs at public colleges in Connecticut.

By way of background, Connecticut's 15 private, non-profit colleges that comprise the membership of CCIC [enroll over 80,000 students in Connecticut annually. They award nearly 50% of the bachelor's degrees earned in the state each year and over 60% of the graduate degrees earned.](#) A number of our member institutions enroll a large percentage of Connecticut residents and the vast majority of those graduates stay in state upon completion. A study utilizing data from P20 WIN found that 74% of Connecticut residents who graduated from a CCIC institution were found working in-state after graduation.

CCIC's member institutions are working hard to be responsive to the needs of employers by developing in-demand degree programs, establishing relationships with local employers to develop pipelines for our students and working closely with the Office of Workforce Strategy and other state agencies.

Accordingly, CCIC's member institutions play a significant role in training individuals where the state is seeking to expand the talent pipeline: [educators, law enforcement officials, health professions, engineers, etc.](#) The state will simply not accomplish its goals to meet employer demand without including the independent colleges in its workforce strategies.

As it relates to the legislation being heard today, CCIC would ask that once drafted, that these bills allow for students attending relevant degree programs at the private, non-profit colleges located in the state to benefit equally from any scholarship or loan forgiveness opportunities that are created as students attending Connecticut public colleges.

Thank you for considering this request and please let me know if you require additional information.